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| TEDE-00 | INR-00 | IO-00 | LAB-01 | L-00 | M-00 | DCP-00 | |
| NSAE-00 | NSCE-00 | OIC-00 | NIMA-00 | PA-00 | MCC-00 | GIWI-00 | |
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FM AMEMBASSY NDJAMENA
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INFO AMEMBASSY ABUJA
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AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA
AMEMBASSY BAMAKO
AMEMBASSY KAMPALA
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SENSITIVE

DEPARTMENT FOR AF, AF/C, DRL, INR; LONDON AND PARIS FOR
AFRICAWATCHERS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [KPAO](#) [CD](#)

SUBJECT: GOVERNMENT AND PRESS WRANGLING

REF: NDJAMENA 863

11. (SBU) Summary: Several incidents of press harassment over the past two months are raising concerns about the government's commitment to freedom of the press. Each case is different but a combination of jitters over the public referendum and overzealous government officials have created the appearance of interference. Nonetheless, over the past year, the HCC under Moussa Dago has been notably more active in curbing press activities. Independent newspapers and radio stations continue to vociferously criticize the regime. Still, press and human rights communities believe that recent events are indicative that press harassment is on the rise.
End Summary.

REFERENDUM-RELATED RULES

12. (SBU) The High Council for Communications' (HCC) issued guidelines for broadcasts of programs and commercials related to the public referendum. (Reftel). On May 11, the Supreme Court found that the HCC was in violation of the Chadian Constitution's provisions for press freedom, specifically Article 27. The court decided that private radio stations have the right to determine program content. HCC Chairman Moussa Dago disagreed with the court decision and went ahead with imposing limits on the timing and content of political programming. However, messages from the ruling party's campaign were heard widely. Journalists and human rights groups are highly critical of the HCC under Dago's leadership.

L'OBSEERVATEUR EDITOR DETENTION

13. (SBU) On June 4, National Security Agency (ANS) personnel detained the editor of a newspaper for publishing an open letter from the Kreda ethnic group complaining about poor treatment at the hands of the Zaghawa. ANS agents came to the newspaper office and requested to meet the director of the newspaper, Sy Koumbo Singa Gali. She was not at the office so the agents took Samory Ngaradoumbe, the editor, to ANS headquarters. ANS director Chaibo called Gali and told her report to him. According to Ngaradoumbe, Chaibo demanded the names of those who submitted the open letter to the newspaper. Ngaradoumbe and Gali refused to name the source. Ngaradoumbe remained detained at ANS headquarters while Gali assembled editors of other newspapers, radio stations, unions, human rights groups, and lawyers to come to his defense. Gali also contacted Minister for Public Security Moussa Abderahman and the public prosecutor. Moussa arranged Ngaradoumbe's release from ANS to the judicial police. Ngaradoumbe was freed on June 6 on the grounds that ANS violated the Chadian press code by illegally detaining the

journalist without pressing charges. In addition, the ANS has no arrest powers. On June 9, P/E officer, P/E Assistant, and Press Officer visited Ngaradoumbe. He said that he was verbally threatened, but not otherwise mistreated at ANS headquarters. Ngaradoumbe speculated that his detention was the result of overzealous agents.

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RADIO BRAKLOSS CLOSURE
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14. (SBU) On May 29, the High Council for Communications (HCC) closed Radio Brakoss, a community radio based in Moissala, southern Chad for a third time. Radio Brakoss has had problems with local authorities since last year. On June 9, P/E officer and assistants met with Tchanguiz Vatankah and Claire Kemte Collete, the owner and director of the station. HCC said the station was closed for airing an in-depth discussion with the board of governors of Radio Brakoss. The problem has its roots in a long-running feud between the station and the chief commander of the gendarmerie, Hissein Haggar, and the Prefect, Bouba Dalissou. On this occasion, the radio station denounced the activities of coupeurs de route (armed robbers), the release of criminals by gendarmes from the prison, and the mistreatment of local citizens by

herders and gendarmes. Prior to the station's closure, Haggar and Balissou threatened Vatankah's life in the presence of the interim Minister of Communications Djividi Boukar-Dibeing who was on an official visit to the area.

15. (SBU) The HCC charges that the radio station is not run by qualified people. However, Vatankah pointed out that the director has a communications degree and continues her professional education. According to Vatankah, the HCC wants him to re-open the radio station. Vatankah refused because he has filed a case against the HCC in the Supreme Court and cannot re-open until the case is heard. A second radio station, La Voix du Paysan, in the oil-producing region, was summoned by the Governor of Doba and warned to cease discussion the results of the referendum.

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GOVERNMENT THREATENS LE TEMPS
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16. (SBU) On May 27, the government publicly threatened to sue the newspaper Le Temps for publishing a picture of the massacre of members of the Ouaddai ethnic group at the hands of the Zagawa at Ouadi Hamra earlier in the month. According to the interim Minister of Communication, Le Temps violated the press law by manipulating information coming from eastern Chad to impinge the reputation of the government between May 25 and May 31. He charged that the newspaper published a graphic photograph purported to be of the massacre victims with the intention of inciting public unrest. He also doubted the authenticity of the picture. The government has released a communiqué countering the information and photograph that appeared in Le Temps. It is not clear if the government has initiated a court case.

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COMMENT
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17. (SBU) Despite its considerable freedom to criticize the government, the press has on occasion become the target for government harassment because the opposition political parties are weak and the independent media is the key medium for shaping public opinion. In these cases, the government may very well blame overzealous officials. However, the government has taken no action against those officials involved in these incidents nor tried to correct the impression of intimidation they have created. We intend to raise these incidents with the HCC, Minister of Communications, and Attorney General in coming days.

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